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SUBJECT: ARMENIA: MEDIA REACTION ON DAS BRYZA VISIT

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SUMMARY  
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1. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Bryza visited Armenia on March 6-8. As part of his visit, Bryza held a press conference on March 7 that received broad coverage from the print and broadcast media. The press reported on Bryza's comments on energy security, Nagorno-Karabakh, the destruction of cross stones in Old Jugha, the democratization of Armenia, and U.S.-Armenia military cooperation, among other topics. END SUMMARY.

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DIVERSITY IS KEY TO ARMENIA'S ENERGY SECURITY  
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2. The media widely covered DAS Bryza's comments regarding Armenia's energy security. "Haykakan Zhamanak," a tabloid daily, published an article noting that Bryza "answered questions about the energy security of Armenia, particularly about questions on the Armenia-Iran gas pipeline. According to Mr. Bryza, the key to energy security for Armenia, as for any country, is diversity." Armenia Liberty, RFE/RL's Armenian service, quoted Bryza as saying, "Bryza went on to indicate that Washington is ready to help the landlocked country reduce its heavy dependence on Russian energy resources. But he stopped short of endorsing the Armenian government's decision to build a gas pipeline from Iran....Bryza argued...that diversification of Armenia's energy resource supplies related to 'not just natural gas but other types of energy as well, which is hydropower, geothermal power as well as potentially a new generation of nuclear power.' The remarks suggest that the U.S. does not object to the Armenian government's extremely ambitious plans to build a new nuclear power station in place of the Metsamor plant, which is due to be decommissioned by 2016."

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"I WOULD NOT CHARACTERIZE RAMBOUILLET AS A FAILURE"  
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3. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict was another focus of media coverage of the press conference. "Aravot," an opposition daily, remarked, "In response to a question about whether the United States still hopes that the Karabakh issue will be settled this year, especially considering the failure of Rambouillet and the recent disagreements between the two conflicting sides, Bryza said, 'I wouldn't characterize Rambouillet as a failure or agree with anyone who would argue that the process has stopped or that the Minsk Group has run its course.'" Armenia Liberty published an article entitled, "Armenia, Azerbaijan Still 'Very Close' to Karabakh Deal." The article states, "Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe Matthew Bryza played down

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President Robert Kocharian's and Ilham Aliyev's failure to live up to unusually high expectations from their two-day meeting at Rambouillet chateau near Paris." The article quotes Bryza as saying, "The sides are very close to a framework or interim agreement. But it's always the last few steps that are the most difficult." The article states that "sources close to the Rambouillet talks have told REF/RL that Karabakh's future status remains the main bone of contention."

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DESTRUCTION OF CROSS STONES IN OLD JUGHA IS "TRAGEDY"  
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4. Armenpress, a government-run news agency, published an article entitled, "Matthew Bryza Says Destruction of Armenian Cross Stones in Old Jugha is Tragedy." The article states, "The destruction of Armenian cross stones in Old Jugha is a tragedy, but the United States cannot undertake steps to stop this, as it is happening in another country [said Bryza]." The article quotes Bryza as saying, "We show the Azerbaijani leadership how seriously we treat the issue. We hope that those who destroyed the Armenian monuments will be punished and such incidents will not be repeated again."

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ARMENIA IS A DEMOCRATIZING COUNTRY  
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15. Bryza's comments regarding Armenia's democratization were covered widely by the press. Armenia Liberty reported, "Also, Bryza pointedly avoided any criticism of the Kocharian administration's democracy and human rights record, speaking instead of the need for ordinary Armenians to develop a 'culture of democracy' and urging the Armenian opposition to operate 'constructively.' 'We hope over the next few months and years to use all of our assistance levers to build democracy not only from the top down but most importantly from the bottom up,' Bryza said..." An article in "Aravot" entitled "Democracy from the Top Down," states, "In response to a question about whether he considers Armenia to be a democratic, autocratic, or totalitarian society, Bryza said that there is no label he would apply to Armenia other than that it is a democratizing country."

16. "168 Hours," an opposition newspaper, published an article entitled "Democracy from the Bottom Up." The article states, "We think that journalists did not pay enough attention to the most important idea expressed by Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Eurasia Matthew Bryza, as they were more interested in the recall of the U.S. Ambassador. In fact, Bryza made a sensational statement--he announced that from now on the U.S. will work in Armenia not 'from the top down, but from the bottom up.'" The article continues, "If somebody does not understand what is meant by building democracy from the bottom up, we will explain this with great pleasure. This means democratic revolution. Call it whatever you want--an 'orange revolution,' a 'rose revolution,' or anything else. The essence will not be changed. It is most important that a goal was announced--the U.S. will work to foment democratic revolution in Armenia."

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U.S. WELCOMES POLITICAL-MILITARY COOPERATION WITH ARMENIA  
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17. Media coverage also focused on Bryza's statements regarding U.S.-Armenian military cooperation. Arka, an independent news agency, reported, "The USA welcomes military-political cooperation with Armenia, Deputy Assistant of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Matthew Bryza told reporters. 'This cooperation depends on the Armenian Government, and we welcome it,' he said." "Hayastani Hanrapetutian," a government-owned daily, reported, "Sincere laughter was the first reaction of Bryza to the question of whether the U.S. will respond as quickly to Armenia as it did to Georgia if Armenia decides to remove Russian military bases. He then said that the U.S. only encouraged Georgia in expressing its independent will, and that the United States does not make decisions for anyone else."

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